The Abysmal Brute

By JACK LONDON

CHAPTER III.

OLD Pat's eyes were brightly moist with pride and triumph.

"An' what will you be thinkin' to happen when some of the gay an' ugly ones tries to rough it on him?" he asked.

"He'll kill them sure," was Stubener's verdict.

"No, he's too cool for that. But he'll just hurt them some for their dirtiness."

"Let's draw up the contract," said the manager.

"Wait till you know the whole worth of him," old Pat answered. "'Tis strong terms I'll be makin' you come to. Go for a deer hunt with the boy over the hills an' learn the lungs and the legs of him. Then we'll sign up ironclad and regular."

Stubener was gone two days on that hunt, and he learned all and more than old Pat had promised and came back a very weary and very humble man.

The young fellow's innocence of the world had been startling to the case hardened manager, but he had found him nobody's fool.

Virgin though his mind was, untouched by all save a narrow mountain experience, nevertheless he had proved possession of a natural keenness and shrewdness far beyond the average.

In a way he was a mystery to Sam, who could not understand his terrible equanimity of temper. Nothing ruffled him or worried him, and his patience was of an enduring primitiveness.

He never swore, not even the futile and emasculated cuss words of sissy boys.

"I'd swear all right if I wanted to," he had explained when challenged by his companion. "But I guess I never come to needing it. When I do I'll swear, I suppose."

Old Pat, resolutely adhering to his decision, said goodby at the cabin.

"It won't be long, Pat, boy, when I'll be readin' about you in the papers. I'd like to go along, but I'm afeard it's me for the mountains till the end."

And then, drawing the manager aside, the old man turned loose on him almost savagely.

"Remember what I've ben tellin' ye over an' over. The boy's clean, an' he's honest. He knows nothing of the rottenness of the game. I kept it all away from him, I tell you. He don't know the meanin' of fake. He knows only the bravery an' romance an' glory of fightin', an' I've filled him up with tales of the old ring heroes, though little enough, God knows, it's set him afire.

"Man, man, I'm tellin' you that I clipped the fight columns from the newspapers to keep it 'way from him—him a-thinkin' I was wantin' them for me scrapbook. He don't know a man ever lay down or threw a fight. So don't you get him in anything that ain't straight. Don't turn the boy's stomach.

"That's why I put in the null an' void clause. The first rottenness an' the contract's broke of itself; no snide division of stake money; no secret arrangements with the movin' pitcher men for guaranteed distance. There's slathers o' money for the both of you. But play it square or you lose. Understand?

"And whatever you'll be doin' watch out for the women," was old Pat's parting admonishment, young Pat astride his horse and reining in dutifully to hear. "Women is death an' damnation, remember that. But when you do find the one, the only one, hang on to her. She'll be worth more than glory an' money. But first be sure, an' when you're sure don't let her slip through your fingers.

"Grab her with the two hands of you and hang on. Hang on if all the world goes to smash an' smithereens. Pat, boy, a good woman is—a good woman. 'Tis the first word and the last."

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Once in San Francisco, Sam Stubener's troubles began. Not that young Pat had a nasty temper or was grouchy as his father had feared. On the contrary, he was phenomenally sweet and mild.

But he was homesick for his beloved mountains; also he was secretly appalled by the city, though he trod its roaring streets imperturbable as a red Indian.

"I came down here to fight," he announced at the end of the first week. "Where's Jim Hanford?"

Stubener whistled.

"A big champion like him wouldn't look at you," was his answer. "'Go and get a reputation,' is what he'd say."

"I can lick him."

"But the public doesn't know that. If you licked him you'd be champion of the world, and no champion ever became so with his first fight."

"I can."

"But the public doesn't know it, Pat. It wouldn't come to see you fight. And it's the crowd that brings the money and the big purses. That's why Jim Hanford wouldn't consider you for a second. There'd be nothing in it for him.

"Besides, he's getting $3,000 a week right now in vaudeville, with a contract for twenty-five weeks. Do you think he'd chuck that for a go with a man no one ever heard of? You've got to do something first—make a record. You've got to begin on the little local dubs that nobody ever heard of—guys like Club Collins, Roughhouse Kelly and the Flying Dutchman.

"When you've put them away, you're only started on the first round of the ladder. But after that you'll go up like a balloon."

"I'll meet those three named in the same ring one after the other," was Pat's decision. "Make the arrangements accordingly."

Stubener laughed.

"What's wrong? Don't you think I can put them away?"

"I know you can," Stubener assured him. "But it can't be arranged that way. You've got to take them one at a time. Besides, remember, I know the game and I'm managing you. This proposition has to be worked up, and I'm the boy that knows how. If we're

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lucky you may get to the top in a couple of years and be the champion with a mint of money."

Pat sighed at the prospect, then brightened up.

"And after that I can retire and go back home to the old man," he said.

Stubener was about to reply, but checked himself. Strange as was this championship material, he felt confident that when the top was reached it would prove very similar to that of all the others who had gone before.

Besides, two years was a long way off, and there was much to be done in the meantime.

When Pat fell to moping around his quarters, reading endless poetry books and novels drawn from the public library, Stubener sent him off to live on a Contra Costa ranch across the bay, under the watchful eye of Spider Walsh.

At the end of a week Spider whispered that the job was a cinch. His charge was away and over the hills from dawn till dark, whipping the streams for trout, shooting quail and rabbits and pursuing the one lone and crafty buck famous for having survived a decade of hunters. It was the Spider, who waxed lazy and fat, while his charge kept himself in condition.

As Stubener expected, his unknown was laughed at by the fight club managers. Were not the woods full of unknowns who were always breaking out with championship rashes?

A preliminary, say of four rounds—yes, they would grant him that. But the main event—never. Stubener was resolved that young Pat should make his debut in nothing less than a main event, and, by the prestige of his own name he at last managed it.

With much misgiving the Mission club agreed that Pat Glendon could go fifteen rounds with Rough House Kelly for a purse of $100. It was the custom of young fighters to assume the names of old ring heroes, so no one suspected that he was the son of the great Pat Glendon, while Stubener held his peace. It was a good press surprise package to spring later.

Came the night of the fight after a month of waiting. Stubener's anxiety was keen. His professional reputation was staked that his man would make a showing, and he was astounded to see Pat seated in his corner a bare five minutes lose the healthy color from his cheeks, which turned a sickly yellow.

"Cheer up, boy," Stubener said, slapping him on the shoulder. "The first time in the ring is always strange, and Kelly has a way of letting his opponent wait for him on the chance of getting stage fright."

"It isn't that," Pat answered. "It's the tobacco smoke. I'm not used to it and it's making me fair sick."

His manager experienced the quick shock of relief. A man who turned sick from mental causes, even if he were a Samson, could never win to place in the prize ring. As for tobacco smoke, the youngster would have to get used to it, that was all.

Young Pat's entrance into the ring had been met with silence, but when Rough House Kelly crawled through the ropes his greeting was uproarious.

He did not belie his name. He was a ferocious looking man, black and hairy, with huge, knotty muscles, weighing a full 200 pounds.

Pat looked across at him curiously and received a savage scowl. After both had been introduced to the audience they shook hands.

And even as their gloves gripped Kelly ground his teeth, convulsed his face with an expression of rage and muttered:

"You've got yer nerve wid yeh." He flung Pat's hand roughly from his and hissed, "I'll eat yeh up, ye pup!"

The audience laughed at the action, and it guessed hilariously at what Kelly must have said.

Back in his corner and waiting the gong, Pat turned to Stubener.

"Why is he angry with me?" he asked.

"He ain't," Stubener answered. "That's his way, trying to scare you. It's just mouth fighting."

"It isn't boxing," was Pat's comment. And Stubener, with a quick glance, noted that his eyes were as mildly blue as ever.

"Be careful," the manager warned as the gong for the first round sounded and Pat stood up. "He's liable to come at you like a man eater."

And like a man eater Kelly did come at him, rushing across the ring in wild fury. Pat, who in his easy way had advanced only a couple of paces, gauged the other's momentum, sidestepped and brought his stiff arched right across to the jaw.

Then he stood and looked on with a great curiosity.

The fight was over.

Kelly had fallen like a stricken bullock to the floor, and there he lay without movement while the referee, bending over him, shouted the ten seconds in his unheeding ear.

When Kelly's seconds came to lift him Pat was before them. Gathering the huge, inert bulk of the man in his arms, he carried him to his corner and deposited him on the stool and in the arms of his seconds.

Half a minute later Kelly's head lifted and his eyes wavered open. He looked about him stupidly and then to one of his seconds.

"What happened?" he queried hoarsely. "Did the roof fall on me?"

As a result of his fight with Kelly, though the general opinion was that he had won by a fluke, Pat was matched with Rufe Mason. This took place three weeks later, and the Sierra club audience at Dreamland rink failed to see what happened.

Rufe Mason was a heavyweight, noted locally for his cleverness. When the gong for the first round sounded both men met in the center of the ring. Neither rushed. Nor did they strike a blow.

They felt around each other, their arms bent, their gloves so close together that they almost touched. This lasted for perhaps five seconds.

Then it happened, and so quickly that not one in a hundred of the audience saw. Rufe Mason made a feint with his right. It was obviously not a real feint, but a feeler, a mere tentative threatening of a possible blow.

It was at this instant that Pat loosed his punch. So close together were they that the distance the blow traveled was a scant eight inches. It was a short arm left jolt, and it was accomplished by a twist of the left forearm and a thrust of the shoulder.

It landed flush on the point of the chin, and the astounded audience saw Rufe Mason's legs crumple under him as his body sank to the floor. But the referee had seen, and he promptly proceeded to count him out.

Again Pat carried his opponent to his corner, and it was ten minutes before Rufe Mason, supported by his seconds, with sagging knees and rolling, glassy eyes, was able to move down the aisle through the stupefied and incredulous audience on the way to his dressing room.

"No wonder," he told a reporter, "that Rough House Kelly thought the roof hit him."

After Club Collins had been put out in the twelfth second of the first round of a fifteen round contest Stubener felt compelled to speak to Pat.

"Do you know what they're calling you now?" he asked.

Pat shook his head.

"One Punch Glendon."

Pat smiled politely. He was little interested in what he was called. He had certain work cut out which he must do ere he could win back to his mountains, and he was phlegmatically doing it, that was all.

"It won't do," his manager continued, with an ominous shake of the head. "You can't go on putting your men out so quickly. You must give them more time."

"I'm here to fight, ain't I?" Pat demanded in surprise.

Again Stubener shook his head.

"It's this way, Pat. You've got to be big and generous in the fighting game. Don't get all the other fighters sore. And it's not fair to the audience. They want a run for their money.

"Besides, no one will fight you. They'll all be scared out. And you can't draw crowds with ten second fights. I leave it to you. Would you pay $1 or $5 to see a ten second fight?"

Pat was convinced, and he promised to give future audiences the requisite run for their money, though he stated that, personally, he preferred going fishing to witnessing a hundred rounds of fighting.

CHAPTER IV.

PAT had got practically nowhere in the game. The local sports laughed when his name was mentioned. It called to mind funny fights and Rough House Kelly's remark about the roof.

Nobody knew how Pat could fight. They had never seen him. Where was his wind, his stamina, his ability to mix it with rough customers through long grueling contests?

He had demonstrated nothing but the possession of a lucky punch and a depressing proclivity for flukes.

So it was that his fourth match was arranged with Pete Sosso, a Portuguese fighter from Butchertown, known only for the amazing tricks he played in the ring.

Pat did not train for the fight. Instead he made a flying and sorrowful trip to the mountains to bury his father. Old Pat had known well the condition of his heart, and it had stopped suddenly on him.

Young Pat arrived back in San Francisco with so close a margin of time that he changed into his fighting togs directly from his traveling suit, and even then the audience was kept waiting ten minutes.

"Remember, give him a chance," Stubener cautioned him as he climbed through the ropes. "Play with him, but do it seriously. Let him go ten or twelve rounds, then get him."

Pat obeyed instructions, and, though it would have been easy enough to put Sosso out, so tricky was he that to stand up to him and not put him out kept his hands full.

It was a pretty exhibition, and the audience was delighted. Sosso's whirlwind attacks, wild feints, retreats and rushes required all Pat's science to protect himself, and even then he did not escape unscathed.

Stubener praised him in the minute rests, and all would have been well had not Sosso in the fourth round played one of his most spectacular tricks.

Pat, in a mixup, had landed a hook to Sosso's jaw, when to his amazement the latter dropped his hands and reeled backward, eyes rolling, legs bending and giving, in a high state of grogginess.

Pat could not understand. It had not been a knockout blow, and yet there was his man all ready to fall to the mat. Pat dropped his own hands and wonderingly watched his reeling opponent. Sosso staggered away, almost fell, recovered, and staggered obliquely and blindly forward again.

For the first and the last time in his fighting career Pat was caught off his guard. He actually stepped aside to let the reeling man go by. Still reeling, Sosso suddenly loosed his right. Pat received it full on his jaw with an impact that rattled all his teeth.

A great roar of delight went up from the audience. But Pat did not hear. He saw only Sosso before him, grinning and defiant, and not the least bit groggy. Pat was hurt by the blow, but vastly more outraged by the trick.

All the wrath that his father ever had surged up in him. He shook his head as if to get rid of the shock of the blow and steadied himself before his man. It all occurred in the next second. With a feint that drew his opponent, Pat fetched his left to the solar plexus, almost at the same instant whipping his right across to the jaw.

The latter blow landed on Sosso's mouth ere his falling body struck the floor. The club doctors worked half an hour to bring him to. After that they put eleven stitches in his mouth and packed him off in an ambulance.

"I'm sorry," Pat told his manager. "I'm afraid I lost my temper. I'll never do it again in the ring. Dad always cautioned me about it. He said it had made him lose more than one battle. I didn't know I could lose my temper that way. But now that I know I'll keep it in control."

And Stubener believed him. He was coming to the stage where he could believe anything about his young charge.

"You don't need to get angry," he said. "You're so thoroughly the master of your man at any stage."

"At any inch or second of the fight," Pat affirmed.

"And you can put them out any time you want."

"Sure I can. I don't want to boast, but I just seem to possess the ability. My eyes show me the opening that my skill knows how to make, and time and distance are second nature to me. Dad called it a gift, but I thought he was blarneying me. Now that I've been up against these men, I guess he was right. He said I had the mind and muscle correlation."

"At any inch or second of the fight," Stubener repeated musingly.

Pat nodded, and Stubener, absolutely believing him, caught a vision of a golden future that should have fetched old Pat out of his grave.

"Well, don't forget, we've got to give the crowd a run for its money," he said. "We'll fix it up between us how many rounds a fight should go. Now our next bout will be with the Flying Dutchman. Suppose you let it run the full fifteen and put him out in the last round. That will give you a chance to make a showing as well."

"All right, Sam," was the answer.

"It will be a test for you," Stubener warned. "You may fail to put him out in that last round."

"Watch me." Pat paused to put weight to his promise and picked up a volume of Longfellow. "If I don't I'll never read poetry again, and that's going some."

"You bet it is," his manager proclaimed jubilantly, "though what you see in such stuff is beyond me."

Pat sighed, but did not reply. In all his life he had found but one person who cared for poetry, and that had been the red haired schoolteacher who scared him off into the woods.

"Where are you going?" Stubener demanded in surprise, looking at his watch.

Pat, with his hand on the doorknob, paused and turned around.

"To the Academy of Sciences," he said. "There's a professor who's going to give a lecture there on Browning tonight, and Browning is the sort of writer you need assistance with. Sometimes I think I ought to go to night school."

"But, great Scott, man!" exclaimed the horrified manager. "You're on with the Flying Dutchman tonight!"

"I know it. But I won't enter the ring a moment before half past 9 or quarter to 10. The lecture will be over at 9:15. If you want to make sure come around and pick me up in your machine."

Stubener shrugged his shoulders helplessly.

"You've got no kick coming," Pat assured him. "Dad used to tell me a man's worst time was in the hours just before a fight and that many a fight was lost by a man's breaking down right there, with nothing to do but think and be anxious. Well, you'll never need to worry about me that way. You ought to be glad I can go off to a lecture."

And later that night, in the course of watching fifteen splendid rounds, Stubener chuckled to himself more than once at the idea of what that audience of sports would think, did it know that this magnificent young prizefighter had come to the ring directly from a Browning lecture.

The Flying Dutchman was a young Swede, who possessed an unwonted willingness to fight and who was blessed with phenomenal endurance.

He never rested, was always on the offensive and rushed and fought from gong to gong. In the outfighting his arms whirled about like flails; in the infighting he was forever shouldering or half wrestling and starting blows whenever he could get a hand free.

From start to finish he was a whirlwind, hence his name. His failing was lack of judgment in time and distance. Nevertheless he had won many fights by virtue of landing one in each dozen or so of the unending fusillades of punches he delivered.

Pat, with strong upon him the caution that he must not put his opponent out, was kept busy. Nor, though he escaped vital damage, could he avoid entirely those eternal flying gloves. But it was good training, and in a mild way he enjoyed the contest.

"Could you get him now?" Stubener whispered in his ear during the minute rest at the end of the fifth round.

"Sure," was Pat's answer.

"You know he's never yet been knocked out by any one," Stubener warned a couple of rounds later.

"Then I'm afraid I'll have to break my knuckles," Pat smiled. "I know the punch I've got in me, and when I land it something has got to go. If he won't my knuckles will."

"Do you think you could get him now?" Stubener asked at the end of the thirteenth round.

"Any time, I tell you."

"Well, then, Pat, let him run to the fifteenth."

In the fourteenth round the Flying Dutchman exceeded himself. At the stroke of the gong he rushed clear across the ring to the opposite corner, where Pat was leisurely getting to his feet.

The house cheered, for it knew the Flying Dutchman had cut loose. Pat, catching the fun of it, whimsically decided to meet the terrific onslaught with a wholly passive defense and not to strike a blow. Nor did he strike a blow nor feint a blow during the three minutes of whirlwind that followed.

He gave a rare exhibition of stalling, sometimes hugging his bowed face with his left arm, his abdomen with his right, at other times changing as the point of attack changed, so that both gloves were held on either side his face or both elbows and forearms guarded his mid section, and all the time moving about, clumsily shouldering or half falling forward against his opponent and clogging his efforts, himself never striking nor threatening to strike, the while rocking with the impacts of the storming blows that beat upon his various guards the devil's own tattoo.

Those close at the ringside saw and appreciated, but the rest of the audience, fooled, arose to its feet and roared its applause in the mistaken notion that Pat, helpless, was receiving a terrible beating.

With the end of the round the audience, dumfounded, sank back into its seats as Pat walked steadily to his corner. It was not understandable. He should have been beaten to a pulp, and yet nothing had happened to him.

"Now, are you going to get him?" Stubener queried anxiously.

"Inside ten seconds," was Pat's confident assertion. "Watch me."

There was no trick about it. When the gong struck and Pat bounded to his feet he advertised it unmistakably that for the first time in the fight he was starting after his man. Not one onlooker misunderstood.

The Flying Dutchman read the advertisement, too, and for the first time in his career as they met in the center of the ring visibly hesitated. For the fraction of a second they faced each other in position.

Then the Flying Dutchman leaped forward upon his man, and Pat, with a timed right cross, dropped him cold as he leaped.

It was after this battle that Pat Glendon started on his upward rush to fame. The sports and the sporting writers took him up. For the first time the Flying Dutchman had been knocked out.

His conqueror had proved a wizard of defense. His previous victories had not been flukes. He had a kick in both his hands. Giant that he was, he would go far.

The time was already past, the writers asserted, for him to waste himself on the third raters and chopping blocks. Where were Ben Menzies, Rege Rede, Bill Tarwater and Ernest Lawson?

It was time for them to meet this young cub that had suddenly shown himself a fighter of quality. Where was his manager anyway, that he was not issuing the challenges?

And then fame came in a day, for Stubener divulged the secret that his man was none other than the son of Pat Glendon, old Pat, the old time ring hero. Young Pat Glendon, he was promptly christened, and sports and writers flocked about him to admire him and back him and write him up.

Beginning with Ben Menzies and finishing with Bill Tarwater, he challenged, fought and knocked out the four second raters. To do this he was compelled to travel, the battles taking place in Goldfield, Denver, Texas and New York. To accomplish it required months, for the bigger fights were not easily arranged, and the men themselves demanded more time for training.

The second year saw him running to cover and disposing of the half dozen big fighters that clustered just beneath the top of the heavyweight ladder.

On this top, firmly planted, stood "Big" Jim Hanford, the undefeated world champion. Here on the top rungs progress was slower, though Stubener was indefatigable in issuing challenges and in promoting sporting opinion to force the man to fight.

Will King was disposed of in England, and Glendon pursued Tom Harrison halfway around the world to defeat him on boxing day in Australia.

(To be Continued Next Saturday.)

All the news all the time—The Argus.